UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/100,133	06/19/1998	DOUGLAS W. CONMY	52817.000013	8229

29315   7590   03/22/2004

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EXAMINER
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ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3623	

DATE MAILED: 03/22/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	09/100,133	CONMY ET AL.
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Susanna M. Diaz	3623	MW

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE _3_ MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.
- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on _01 March 2004_.
2a)☐ This action is **FINAL.**   2b)☒ This action is non-final.
3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) _1-37_ is/are pending in the application.
   4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6)☒ Claim(s) _1-37_ is/are rejected.
7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.
   Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
   Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
   a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:
   1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
   2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
   3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
   * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1)☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2)☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3)☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4)☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ .
5)☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6)☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1.   In response to Applicant's persuasive arguments presented in the after-final

response filed March 1, 2004, the after-final response has been entered and finality has

been withdrawn. A non-final Office action follows.

Claims 1-37 are presented for examination.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2.   The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set
> forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and
> the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the
> invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains.
> Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

3.   Claims 1-20, 23, 25-27, and 29-37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being

unpatentable over Zhang et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,016,478) in view of Meeting Maker

XP, as disclosed in Rizzo ("Meeting Maker XP: ON Technology Takes Its Group

Scheduler Cross-Platform").

Zhang discloses a system for scheduling time intervals for a plurality of invitees

comprising:

[Claim 1]   database means in communication with one or more server means for

storing one or more invitee profiles for one or more potential invitees of the system, the

one or more invitee profiles comprising user profiles wherein each user profile

comprises an electronic mail address for the user (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 11, lines 54-

59);

request generating means, connected over a network to the one or more server

means, for generating a request for allocation of a time interval for the one or more

potential invitees (col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16,

lines 14-23);

means for scheduling a meeting by using the electronic mail address in the

invitee profile to send each of the one or more potential invitees available an invitation

to attend at the time interval requested thereby making each of the one or more

potential invitees an invitee, wherein the electronic mail invitation includes a plurality of

response options for the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation, wherein the

plurality of response options includes accepting the electronic mail invitation and

declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 5, line 66 through col. 6,

line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

means for enabling the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation using at

least one of the plurality of response options (Fig. 7C; col. 13, lines 14-59); and

means for automatically updating the invitee's invitee profile based on the

invitee's response to the electronic mail invitation (col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-

62);

[Claim 2]   wherein the invitee profiles comprise resource profiles regarding one or

more resources (Figs. 8A, 8C ; col. 9, lines 23-50; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 3]   wherein the one or more resources include rooms and wherein the profile

comprises information about the capacity of each room (Fig. 8C; col. 9, lines 23-50; col.

15, lines 28-29);

[Claim 4]   wherein the one or more resources include equipment (col. 9, lines 23-50);

[Claim 31]   wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a

substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col.

13, lines 39-59).

Regarding claims 1 and 2, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a

meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and

corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting

attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their

own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a

proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time

Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a

better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential

meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective

schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each

potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these

electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting

planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential

meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However,

Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that

allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by

displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to

sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s) connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees' schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary invitees are identified and agreed upon. It is noted that Zhang's invitees may include human participants as well as resources, such as rooms and equipment, as discussed above.

Zhang discloses a system for scheduling time intervals for a plurality of invitees comprising:

[Claim 5]   one or more databases, in communication with one or more servers,

which store one or more invitee profiles for one or more potential invitees of the system,

the one or more invitee profiles comprising user profiles wherein each user profile

comprises information regarding an electronic mail address for the user (Figs. 5E, 5G,

7C; col. 11, lines 54-59);

one or more user workstations, connected over a network to the servers,

operating a calendaring system that permits a user to request allocation of a time

interval for the one or more potential invitees (Figs. 1B, 2, 9; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11,

line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

wherein the calendaring system gathers profiles for the one or more potential

invitees by using the electronic mail address stored in the invitee profile for the one or

more potential invitees to send an invitation to the one or more potential invitees thereby

making each of the one or more potential invitees an invitee, wherein the electronic mail

invitation includes a plurality of response options for the invitee to respond to the

electronic mail invitation, wherein the plurality of response options includes accepting

the electronic mail invitation and declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G,

7C; col. 5, line 66 through col. 6, line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

wherein the calendaring system enables the invitee to respond to the electronic

mail invitation using at least one of the plurality of response options (Fig. 7C; col. 13,

lines 14-59); and

wherein the calendaring system automatically updates the invitee's invitee profile based on the invitee's response to the electronic mail invitation (col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-62);

[Claim 8]　　wherein the invitee profiles comprise resource profiles regarding one or more resources (Figs. 8A, 8C ; col. 9, lines 23-50; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 9]　　wherein the one or more resources include rooms and wherein the profile comprises information about the capacity of the room (Fig. 8C; col. 9, lines 23-50; col. 15, lines 28-29);

[Claim 10]　　wherein the one or more resources include equipment (col. 9, lines 23-50);

[Claim 32]　　wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col. 13, lines 39-59).

Regarding claims 5 and 8, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective

schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each

potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these

electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting

planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential

meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However,

Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that

allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by

displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to

sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's

invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and

coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP

provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a

meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of

all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial

meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability

information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as

indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s)

connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's

meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees'

schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting

planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth

between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary

invitees are identified and agreed upon. It is noted that Zhang's invitees may include

human participants as well as resources, such as rooms and equipment, as discussed

above.

Zhang discloses a process for scheduling time intervals for a plurality of invitees

comprising:

[Claim 6]   storing one or more invitee profiles for one or more potential invitees of the

system in a database in communication with one or more servers, the one or more

invitee profiles comprising user profiles wherein each user profile comprises information

regarding an electronic mail address for the user (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 11, lines 54-

59);

receiving a request for allocation of a time interval for the one or more potential

invitees from a remote workstation over a network at one or more servers (col. 10, lines

44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

gathering the profiles for the one or more potential invitees that are available in

the database (Fig. 5E; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col.

16, lines 14-23 -- The listed contact names and corresponding e-mail addresses are a

collection of potential invitee profiles);

inviting the one or more potential invitees to attend at the time interval requested

by using the electronic mail address stored in the profile for those one or more potential

invitees to send an invitation to the one or more potential invitees thereby making each

of the one or more potential invitees an invitee, wherein the electronic mail invitation

includes a plurality of response options for the invitee to respond to the electronic mail

invitation, wherein the plurality of response options includes accepting the electronic

mail invitation and declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 5, line

66 through col. 6, line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

enabling the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation using at least one

of the plurality of response options (Fig. 7C; col. 13, lines 14-59); and

automatically updating the invitee's invitee profile based on the invitee's

response to the electronic mail invitation (col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-62);

[Claim 11]   wherein the invitee profiles comprise resource profiles regarding one or

more resources (Figs. 8A, 8C ; col. 9, lines 23-50; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 12]   wherein the one or more resources include rooms and wherein the profile

comprises information about the capacity of the rooms (Fig. 8C; col. 9, lines 23-50; col.

15, lines 28-29);

[Claim 13]   wherein the one or more resources include equipment (col. 9, lines 23-50);

[Claim 33]   wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a

substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col.

13, lines 39-59).

Regarding claims 6 and 11, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a

meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and

corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However, Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of

all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial

meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability

information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as

indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s)

connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's

meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees'

schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting

planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth

between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary

invitees are identified and agreed upon. It is noted that Zhang's invitees may include

human participants as well as resources, such as rooms and equipment, as discussed

above.

Zhang discloses a processor usable medium having processor readable code

embodied therein for enabling group calendaring between a plurality of users on a

computer system, the system comprising a database, associated with one or more

servers, which stores one or more invitee profiles for one or more potential invitees of

the system, the invitee profiles comprising user profiles wherein each user profile

comprises information regarding an electronic mail address for the user (Figs. 5E, 5G,

7C; col. 11, lines 54-59), the processor readable code in the processor usable medium

comprising:

[Claim 7]   processor readable code for causing a processor to receive a request for

allocation of a time interval for one or more potential invitees (col. 10, lines 44-64; col.

11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

processor readable code for causing a processor to gather the profiles for the

one or more potential invitees (Fig. 5E; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col.

12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23 -- The listed contact names and corresponding e-mail

addresses are a collection of potential invitee profiles);

processor readable code for causing a processor to invite the one or more

potential invitees to attend a meeting at the requested time interval by using the

electronic mail address stored in the profile for each invitee to send an electronic mail

invitation to the one or more potential invitees thereby making each of the one or more

potential invitees an invitee, wherein the electronic mail invitation includes a plurality of

response options for the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation, wherein the

plurality of response options includes accepting the electronic mail invitation and

declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 5, line 66 through col. 6,

line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

processor readable code for causing a processor to enable the invitee to respond

to the electronic mail invitation using at least one of the plurality of response options

(Fig. 7C; col. 13, lines 14-59); and

processor readable code for causing a processor to automatically update the

invitee's invitee profile based on the invitee's response to the electronic mail invitation

(col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-62);

[Claim 14]   wherein the invitee profiles comprise resource profiles regarding one or

more resources (Figs. 8A, 8C ; col. 9, lines 23-50; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 15]   wherein the one or more resources include rooms and wherein the profile

comprises information about the capacity of the rooms (Fig. 8C; col. 9, lines 23-50; col.

15, lines 28-29);

[Claim 16]   wherein the one or more resources include equipment (col. 9, lines 23-50);

[Claim 34]   wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a

substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col.

13, lines 39-59).

        Regarding claims 7 and 14, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a

meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and

corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting

attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their

own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a

proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time

Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a

better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential

meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective

schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each

potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these

electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting

planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential

meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However,

Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that

allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by

displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to

sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's

invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and

coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP

provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a

meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of

all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial

meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability

information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as

indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s)

connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's

meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees'

schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting

planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth

between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary

invitees are identified and agreed upon. It is noted that Zhang's invitees may include

human participants as well as resources, such as rooms and equipment, as discussed above.

Zhang discloses a system for scheduling an event, comprising:

[Claim 17]   a user system operable to send to the server a scheduling request specifying a list of invitees, a date, a start time, and an end time and/or a duration which determines the end time (Figs. 1A-3C; 5D; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23), wherein

the server is further operable to:

receive the scheduling request (col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

send an invitation to one or more of the invitees listed in the request, wherein the electronic mail invitation includes a plurality of response options for the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation, wherein the plurality of response options includes accepting the electronic mail invitation and declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 5, line 66 through col. 6, line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

receive from an invitee a response to the electronic mail invitation having at least one of the plurality of response options (Fig. 7C; col. 13, lines 14-59); and

automatically modify the availability information for the invitee if the invitee's response indicates that the invitee accepts the electronic mail invitation, wherein the availability information is modified to indicate that the invitee is busy

between at least the start time and end time on the date specified in the request (col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-62);

[Claim 23]   wherein availability information for an invitee comprises profile information (Fig. 5E; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 35]   wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col. 13, lines 39-59).

Regarding claims 17, 18, 23, and 25, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However,

Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that

allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by

displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to

sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's

invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and

coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP

provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a

meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of

all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial

meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability

information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as

indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s)

connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's

meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees'

schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting

planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth

between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary

invitees are identified and agreed upon.

Furthermore, as per claims 19 and 20, Meeting Maker XP discloses an "Auto-

Pick feature" with its composite schedule display capabilities. Auto-Pick allows a

meeting planner "to get Meeting Maker XP to locate the earliest time slot available for all

of your required guests" (¶ 7). Since Auto-Pick finds the earliest time slot available for

all required guests, it is understood that the Auto-Pick feature assigns a greater

weighting value to required guests than optional guests, which are specified by the

meeting planner (¶¶ 6-7). Again, this feature of Meeting Maker XP provides a natural

enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a meeting over a

network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to one of

ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to implement Meeting Maker

XP's Auto-Pick feature, which is understood as utilizing a server to determine one or

more alternative start times for the event, wherein the determination is based, at least in

part, on the retrieved availability information (claim 19) and wherein the determination of

the one or more alternative start times is further based on weighting values assigned to

one or more of the invitees (claim 20), as part of Zhang's invention in order to assist

Zhang's meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential

invitees' schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the

meeting planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back

and forth between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all

necessary invitees are identified and agreed upon. Furthermore, as more potential

invitees are invited to a meeting, it becomes more difficult to establish a date and time

amenable to all invitees; therefore, it is more realistic and productive to find a date and

time amenable to those invitees whose presence at the meeting is crucial. The

weighting values corresponding to required or optional invitees facilitate such a

determination when utilizing the Auto-Pick feature and also provide the same benefit to a user of Zhang's invention.

Zhang discloses a method for scheduling an event, comprising:

[Claim 26]   receiving from an event coordinator a scheduling request specifying a list of invitees, a date, a start time, and an end time and/or a duration which determines the end time (Figs. 1A-3C; 5D; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

sending an invitation to one or more of the invitees listed in the request, wherein the electronic mail invitation includes a plurality of response options for the invitee to respond to the electronic mail invitation, wherein the plurality of response options includes accepting the electronic mail invitation and declining the electronic mail invitation (Figs. 5E, 5G, 7C; col. 5, line 66 through col. 6, line 46; col. 11, lines 54-59);

receiving from an invitee a response to the electronic mail invitation having at least one of the plurality of response options (Fig. 7C; col. 13, lines 14-59); and

automatically modifying the availability information for the invitee in response to receiving the invitee's response if the invitee's response indicates that the invitee accepts the invitation, wherein the availability information is modified to indicate that the invitee is busy between at least the start time and end time on the date specified in the request (col. 7, lines 27-32; col. 8, lines 59-62);

[Claim 27]   wherein availability information for an invitee comprises profile information (Fig. 5E; col. 10, lines 44-64; col. 11, line 6 through col. 12, line 11; col. 16, lines 14-23);

[Claim 36]   wherein the plurality of response options further includes assigning a

substitute attendee for the meeting and requesting for re-scheduling the meeting (col.

13, lines 39-59).

        Regarding claims 26, 27, and 29, Zhang invites potential meeting attendees to a

meeting using an electronic message system that transmits meeting invitations and

corresponding responses via a server (as discussed above). The potential meeting

attendees alert the meeting planner as to whether or not they can attend based on their

own stored calendars. When a potential meeting attendee is not available for a

proposed meeting, he/she has the option of attaching his/her "Calendar's Free Time

Report for Next 30 Days" (Fig. 6B) in order to assist the meeting planner in assessing a

better date for the proposed meeting (col. 15, lines 1-10). Therefore, Zhang's potential

meeting attendees manually make the meeting planner aware of their respective

schedules and may optionally attach a file containing information regarding each

potential attendee's free time for the next 30 days; Zhang's server transmits these

electronic mail messages among the various potential meeting attendees and meeting

planners, yet the server itself does not avail the meeting planner of each potential

meeting attendee's schedule before the meeting invitation is initially sent out. However,

Meeting Maker XP makes up for this deficiency in its teaching of a calendar window that

allows a meeting planner to pick a time when all potential invitees are available by

displaying "a composite of the schedules of all required and optional guests" prior to

sending each potential invitee the initial meeting invitation (¶ 7). Similar to Zhang's

invention, Meeting Maker XP "lets mixed-platform workgroups plan meetings and

coordinate schedules over a network" (Rizzo, ¶ 2). This feature of Meeting Maker XP

provides a natural enhancement to Zhang who is also facilitating group scheduling of a

meeting over a network; therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

implement Meeting Maker XP's capability of displaying "a composite of the schedules of

all required and optional guests" prior to sending each potential invitee the initial

meeting invitation, which is understood as accessing each potential invitee's availability

information (e.g., based on previously scheduled events, activities, vacations, etc.) as

indicated in each potential invitee's respective calendar profile via a database(s)

connected to at least one server, with Zhang's invention in order to assist Zhang's

meeting planner in selecting a date that is likely most amenable to all potential invitees'

schedules before sending out the initial meeting invitation. This saves the meeting

planner time and hassle that would otherwise be associated with going back and forth

between the potential invitees until a meeting time and date free for all necessary

invitees are identified and agreed upon. It is noted that Zhang's invitees may include

human participants as well as resources, such as rooms and equipment, as discussed

above.

[Claims 30, 37]   Claims 30 and 37 recite limitations already addressed by the

rejection of claims 26 and 36 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

4.   Claims 21, 22, 24, and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being

unpatentable over Zhang et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,016,478) in view of Meeting Maker

XP, as disclosed in Rizzo ("Meeting Maker XP: ON Technology Takes Its Group

Scheduler Cross-Platform"), as applied to claims 17, 23, and 27 above, and further in

view of Tognazzini (U.S. Patent No. 5,790,974).

Zhang's scheduling system allows a meeting planner to specify the location and

time zone of a proposed event (Figs. 5I, 6A, 7A, 13; col. 11, lines 44-53), yet Zhang

does not explicitly take invitee location into account in order to determine invitee

availability for a particular event; however, Tognazzini makes up for this deficiency.

Tognazzini teaches an automated scheduling system that takes into account event

location and invitee location in order to determine if the invitee can feasibly attend the

event in question (e.g., based on travel time). There may be a periodic real-time check

to see where the invitee is presently located and then if the invitee can arrive at his/her

next planned event in time, based on a real-time determination of travel time to the next

scheduled event. An alert is provided if the invitee is running late or stuck in traffic and

cannot make his/her next scheduled event in time. Also, travel time is taken into

account when determining an invitee's ability to attend a future event (column 7, lines

11-66). This consideration of travel time between locations and events helps alleviate

any conflicts in scheduling that would otherwise arise due to failure to take into account

the reality that travel time is needed to get from one location to another. Furthermore,

Zhang's invention is intended to be utilized by participants throughout various time

zones (col. 2, lines 16-20); therefore, the Examiner asserts that it would have been

obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

implement Tognazzini's consideration of event location and invitee location, including

travel time, when determining invitee availability with Zhang's scheduling system in

order to provide for more accurate and realistic assessment of the availability of all

invitees when planning an event. For example, if one of the invitees if listed as

available for a meeting at 2 p.m. E.S.T. on a particular day in Washington, D.C., but the

invitee is out in San Francisco for a meeting which runs from 12 to 1 p.m. E.S.T. (9 to

10 a.m. P.S.T.), obviously the invitee cannot likely fly back to make the meeting in

Washington, D.C. within an hour. The integration of Tognazzini's scheduling features

enables Zhang's invention to take such location considerations into account, thereby

resulting in more "intelligent" scheduling decisions being made by Zhang as part of its

scheduling features.

Furthermore, regarding claims 24 and 28, Zhang does not expressly teach that

the profile information for an invitee comprises information regarding the invitee's work

hours; however, Zhang assists in scheduling various events, such as business/work

related meetings (Fig. 5C). Zhang also stores a schedule of resources that can be

reserved, such as a conference room (Fig. 8E). Business/work related meetings and

conference rooms are typically conducted and utilized during work hours; therefore, the

availability of a person or a resource for work-related activities would likely depend on

the person's work hours and work hours of the entity (e.g., person or business)

maintaining the requested resource. As such, the Examiner asserts that it would have

been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to

include information regarding the invitee's work hours in the invitee's profile as part of

the Zhang-Tognazzini combination in order to facilitate the planning of work-related

events (i.e., events which are normally conducted during the work hours of a person

and/or business).

Conclusion

5.   The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to

Applicant's disclosure.

The references cited on the attached PTO Form 892 and not applied in the art

rejection disclose various aspects of well-known scheduling systems. These scheduling

systems contain various permutations of features recited in the claimed invention.

6.   This Office action has an attached requirement for information under 37 C.F.R. §

1.105. A complete response to this Office action must include a complete response to

the attached requirement for information. The time period for reply to the attached

requirement coincides with the time period for reply to this Office action.

7.   Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the

examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (703) 305-

1337. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 9 am - 5 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's

supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (703) 305-9643.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or

proceeding should be directed to the Receptionist whose telephone number is

(703)308-1113.

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

or faxed to:

(703)305-7687   [Official communications; including
                          After Final communications labeled
                          "Box AF"]

(703)746-7048   [Informal/Draft communications, labeled
                          "PROPOSED" or "DRAFT"]

Hand delivered responses should be brought to Crystal Park 5, 2451 Crystal
Drive, Arlington, VA, 22202, 7th floor receptionist.

Susanna M. Diaz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623
March 17, 2004